



1/26/78

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(X) Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

TQ: The Deputy Secretary

FROM: ARA - John A. Bushnell, Acting

Diplomatic Efforts on Behalf of the Thirteen
Argentines and Two French Nuns who
Disappeared in December

You requested information on what the United States, France and others have done on behalf of the thirteen individuals who disappeared in December. They were men and women associated with the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" and two French nuns. All were active in efforts to dramatize the plight of the disappeared in Argentina and, at the time, were seeking signatures and funds for a petition which was to be published, and was, in the Argentine press.

Ten of the victims disappeared from the Church of Santa Cruz on December 8. Three others were abducted shortly thereafter.

On December 11, a member of the Mother's group met with our Embassy and sought U. S. assistance. Our Ambassador responded promptly raising the matter with Army Chief of Staff Viola, Navy Commander Massera, Economy Minister Martinez de Hoz and Defense Minister Klix, while other U. S. Embassy officers raised their concern with their Argentine counterparts. Our Embassy continues to bring up this subject in most official conversations, as indicated in the attached cable which reports on U. S. representations.

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Officers in this Bureau expressed their dismay and concern over the disappearances as soon as we learned of them. The matter has been raised with the Ambassador, as well as the military attaches. Deputy Assistant Secretary Frank McNeil reiterated our concern to the Argentine Ambassador on January 25. The Ambassador replied that Videla told him that the disappearances were "barbaric" and that he would get to the bottom of this matter. The Ambassador promised to keep us informed.

The French have taken an active role in this case because of the two nuns. French President Giscard d'Estaing has written personally to President Videla, and the French Embassy has raised the issue at all levels of the Argentine government. The French military attache informed us that his government did not believe that President Videla or the military service chiefs can possibly be implicated in the case.

The Papal Nuncio is another active participant who has raised the issue with Argentine officials, including the Minister of Interior. Both the Nuncio and the French, according to a January cable from our Embassy, fear the worst in this case.

The question of who engineered the kidnappings remains totally unresolved. Our Embassy has sought assiduously to come up with reliable information, but none is available. Some blame the Navy, some blame the Army, and some blame the Federal Police. No one doubts that elements of the Argentine government are implicated in this affair, but hard facts are unavailable.

We will continue to press for information and to make representations on behalf of those who disappeared.

Attachment:

Cable (Buenos Aires 0640)

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